



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## WAR AND THE DEMOCRATIC STATE<sup>1</sup>

L. L. BERNARD  
University of Missouri

Herbert Spencer set forth a theory<sup>2</sup> which in its main import signifies that there is a general evolutionary tendency for society to develop from a military to an industrial type of organization, and that with the coming of a well-developed industrial order of society the compulsory nature of the state will largely disappear and we shall have democracy. There seems to be implied in this theory an inherent correlation of industrialism, a minimum of political government, and the absence of war, which must disappear with the coming of the democratic industrial organization of society.

Herein lie at least three significant errors in Spencer's thinking and in that of some modern publicists, which may be stated briefly as follows.

1. The industrial organization of society does not dissipate the coercive political organization. On the contrary, it seems to multiply political functions and machinery beyond anything previously dreamed of. Only in a society where industry is self-regulating, where individual and social interests do not conflict, and therefore where individual interests are in harmony, can political controls over industry be dispensed with. To Spencer's *laissez-faire* view of society such automatic and negative self-regulation of industry and of the state seemed as feasible and as desirable as the divine harmony of interests or impulses appeared to Fourier. Both are equally illusory.

2. The industrialization of society does not abolish war any more than it abolishes the political state. It may possibly be contended with some truth that the number of wars and struggles due to personal rivalries between kings and dynasties has decreased in our

<sup>1</sup> Read before the Western Philosophical Association, St. Louis, April 21, 1916.

<sup>2</sup> *Principles of Sociology*, Part V, chap. xvii-xix.

industrial era, but we should not be too hasty in concluding therefrom that with the coming of the industrial organization of the state wars are disappearing. Industrialism is itself an increasingly effective cause of war. Though Spencer lived in the midst of a developing industrial era, he failed to appreciate the measure of the significance of economic forces in the evolution of society. Wars from the earliest times have not been merely personal quarrels due to formal slights or personal insults. They were quite as often struggles for personal and group possessions. In our modern societies, where the individual dignity sinks into a smaller significance and the power of personal leadership is somewhat mitigated by a popular, if intangible, referendum; in short, where public-mindedness in large measure takes the place of mob-mindedness as a method of social adjustment and control, the economic factor becomes the chief source of friction between classes and peoples. Though only occasionally do hungry mobs fight directly for food in our complex society, with its splendid facilities for physical distribution, we continually struggle for the possession of those things which produce or command food. The labor union struggles for higher wages, and the maritime and industrial state contends with rival maritime and industrial states for markets which give in exchange foods and raw materials for finished products. And not infrequently this contest is not merely legislative or diplomatic but is sanguinary, as it is at Ludlow or Youngstown, or in Europe today. Here the struggle for food, however indirectly mediated and manifested, which is inevitable in our industrialism as it is now organized, becomes the strongest cause of war.

3. One other error into which Spencer and the neo-Spencerians have fallen should be mentioned. An industrial organization of society no more than a military organization of society is the inevitable correlate of democracy. No doubt a democracy could under certain conditions exist in either form of social organization, and possibly the industrial organization is inherently more favorable to democracy than is the military; but as a matter of fact industrialism appears at the present time to be working against democracy in favor of autocracy and even to be creating a military organization in its service as a means to subjugating those who

love democracy too well. In modern Germany industrialism in league with the traditional political hierarchy has created in the service of autocracy the most powerful war machine ever known, in Great Britain it has created and maintained the greatest navy, and the foreign-trade expansionists in this country are now seeking to do the same thing for us on a smaller scale, under the shibboleth of "preparedness"—that is, preparedness for the conquest of world-trade.<sup>1</sup> In brief, then, the modern industrial state is by no means democratic. Whether it can be made to become so remains yet to be seen. Some insight into this problem can perhaps be gained from a brief review of the development of the industrial state as we have it today.

The states of the ancient world were, generally speaking, relatively small in extent of territory and in population because of the absence of two great unifying factors—adequate facilities for transportation and a good industrial organization of society. Diverse peoples can be brought together under a single allegiance only through the force of conquering or menacing arms or a common economic interest. In a society which is poorly developed industrially there can be no great community of economic interests extending over a wide range of territory, and where transportation facilities are poor a political unity imposed through military conquest must be limited in extent and in duration. The lack of industrial development of the ancient world will largely account for the great number of small states with a diversity of languages and customs. Only where agriculture was well developed and where the agricultural regions were united by relatively ample transportation facilities do we find large states developing. In a

<sup>1</sup> This attitude is well expressed in the following paragraph from an article by C. L. Penny dealing with foreign trade policy in *American Industries* for April, 1916, pp. 13-14 (italics mine): "The real struggle of today between industrial nations is the struggle for *control of markets* in agricultural or food-producing countries. This struggle had assumed, *before the war reverted it to its older and more primitive form*, a very novel mode of conquest. For a long time, the old, unproductive method of military conquest had given way to the more refined and much higher method of *financial conquest*. This method consists of an extension of credit by the wealthier industrial nation toward the upbuilding of its agricultural contributor or partner by means of which the industrial nation insures the safety of its arteries of trade and secures the products of the agricultural nation."

few instances, as in the cases of the Alexandrian and Roman empires, well-organized armies were used to overrun and conquer wide expanses of isolated and largely defenseless territory. But as soon as these peoples were aroused to their dangers and had time to develop systems of military defense for themselves, both these great empires crumbled. Simultaneous attacks from a great many quarters upon these mushroom empires broke them up completely. The Alexandrian empire did not last a generation. The Roman empire, thanks to the care given to the matter of the construction of military roads on land and to its central position upon the greatest highway of antiquity—the Mediterranean—was able to maintain its hold upon outlying provinces for a longer time. But ultimately the demand that its armies be in widely separated places almost simultaneously proved too much for it and it collapsed. Its attacks had merely aroused the slumbering peoples to the north from their isolation and they in turn entered upon a period of marauding and conquest, perhaps stimulated by an economic necessity—the overpressure of their populations upon the food supply obtainable from the type of industry with which they were then familiar.

It is interesting to note that out of all these struggles of the ancient world for personal or political aggrandizement or for economic advantage not a single great national unity arose with the elements of permanency in it. The various peoples had no great interest in common. This discreteness of political organizations and units continued through the period known as feudalism, largely because there was a reversion rather than an advance in industrial organization at this time. Under the influence of the northern conquests the world had returned in large measure to a primitive agricultural basis, and it was some centuries before the handicrafts developed sufficiently to call forth a commerce which could again bring widely separated or even neighboring peoples into extensive peaceful contact with one another. Even when the stimulus to commerce came through the increase of commodities of trade those in power discouraged it. It was a convenient and rich object of prey for the land-owning baron and the gentleman highwayman alike. Neither religion nor folk morals protected the trader where

the political power refused, because his vocation was new and the uses of exchange and the validity of a profit from the purveying of novelties were doubtful to the conservative minds of the burghers, and doubtless the priest could sense the hidden danger of new ideas which came packed in the articles of commerce like new diseases.

It was a fortunate train of circumstances which finally gave protection to the trader and thus stimulated the artisan and ultimately fostered a wider peaceful contact of peoples and thus expanded the scope and range of our civilization. Each princeling was quite as eager then as formerly to expand his territory and therefore his power and prestige, but other princelings were equally desirous that he should not be able to do so. The greater military advantage naturally rested with the one who could command and maintain the larger army. For such a purpose mercenaries and revenues were necessary, and mercenaries could be had wherever revenues existed. Thus Machiavelli is only one of the far-seeing political statesmen of early modern times who urge the political value of a well-developed and protected commerce and industry which would be able to yield abundant taxes. Few countries have profited from this teaching more than Germany and England.

Even before Machiavelli's day ambitious princes had begun to offer protection against baron and highwayman to commercial cities and caravans in exchange for taxes and for representation in a semi-mythical parliament or states-general. At first these national assemblies seem to have been primarily if not wholly assemblies for the pledging of fealty and funds—the fealty of the upper orders and the funds of the commercial classes. But in the course of time the lower orders asked for pledges in return for taxes, and in the degree in which the states became industrialized the power of the great industrial and commercial classes increased. In some of them, of which England and the United States may be taken as examples, the balance of power has actually passed out of the hands of the royal and noble classes into the hands of the great financial and commercial classes. In others, represented well by modern Germany, there has resulted a strong protective alliance between the king and nobility on the one hand and the financial and industrial

classes on the other. In the less industrialized states, such as Russia, the commercial and financial classes are still dominated by the upper classes, but a compromise must inevitably follow the reorganization of these states upon an industrial instead of a primitive agricultural economy.

In each of these modern industrialized states where the center of power has been shifted to or toward the great industrial and financial classes, the machinery and the outlook of the state have not greatly changed. The government is still a class government, though the classes in power have been shifted more or less. The great masses of the handworkers and clerical employees while no longer voiceless in the government are still relatively powerless. Even where there is sufficient information and intelligence regarding great issues for the popular will to be formulated in behalf of the popular welfare, and where there is adequate machinery for the popular will thus formed to express itself at the polls, it is still likely to miscarry somewhere between the polls and the act of publication of legislature-made laws, judicial decisions, and executive mandates. As yet in no great modern state—not even in the most industrialized—have the people—the fourth estate—learned to rule and therefore to direct the affairs of the state in the interest of democracy or of themselves.

It is for this reason that it must be contended that the industrial state and the democratic state are not equivalent terms. Apparently a highly efficient industrial organization on a national and even an international scale can flourish at least as well—perhaps even better—under the control of a dynastic or financial oligarchy as in a democratically organized state. Likewise war still persists, though now waged primarily for industrial and commercial advantages. Modern states have grown too large and too complex for merely personal quarrels to be leading factors in the causation of war. Modern wars are mainly for trade or territorial advantages which will strengthen the industrial organization and prestige of a country and from which the ruling classes draw their major sustenance. Thus industrialism, which has in large degree displaced or modified the former powers of kings and nobles, has now become a new cause of war in the interest of those who control industry or profit from its success. But would this be true if the

industrialized states were democratically instead of autocratically or plutocratically controlled? Generally it is assumed that war—at least war in most of its aspects—would cease if we had complete democratic control. This assumption seems to be implicit in the recent widespread demand that all proposals for a foreign war should be submitted to a popular referendum.

But is it possible to produce a democratic organization of society which will have the elements of permanency in it? As the writer conceives it, an affirmative answer to this question depends upon the possibility of the masses of the population achieving three great conditioning means. The first of these and prerequisite to all the others is the acquisition by the public of accurate and full information regarding public affairs and public needs. Doubtless we are much nearer this goal today than we have ever been before. The invention and perfection of cheap printing, the development of other means of rapid communication and transportation, and the growth of science itself—including social science—have together contributed to widen and deepen the information of the masses. But that this information regarding the conditions of their welfare has not been complete or accurate enough to bring about the establishment of a democratic state is evident. There are some obvious causes of this failure. A certain degree of leisure from exhausting physical toil is necessary to an intelligent and exhaustive pursuit of information such as will enable the citizen to compete with the professional politician for governmental control. Great masses of the population yet fall short of a sufficient amount of this leisure. In other cases, where there is sufficient leisure, it is devoted merely to amusement—often of a distracting and enervating kind—rather than to the acquisition of such information as will conduce to the formation of intelligent judgments on public questions. Equally menacing is the tendency, perhaps recently accelerated, for the sources and purveyors of information to become biased, polluted, and perverted. It sometimes seems as if all popular publicity were partisan, and even now many of the specialized seekers nearest the fountains of truth fear to speak freely all they know. It is evident that there must be more than a willingness to learn on the part of the masses; there must also be sufficient leisure, which translated means income, and there



must be established some effective control over amusements and publicity in the interest of social welfare, before this prime requisite for democracy can be obtained.

The second step in the acquisition of democratic control is the development of a machinery for popular self-expression in order that the people may make their knowledge effective. As yet no machinery of this sort adequate for the needs of a large industrial state has been developed. If the various direct nomination and primary schemes, the initiative, referendum, and recall, the voters' leagues, and similar agencies for securing popular control over government do not produce efficient results, others must be found, if democratic control is to become a reality; for the percentage of error in our irresponsible representative system is tremendous. But even with the attainment of these various devices for disseminating reliable and adequate information and for securing efficient control over government, there will still have to be a thorough overhauling of the governmental machinery itself and a revision of governmental aims before democratic justice can be attained. Such a question as this of social justice, already acute in the time of Plato and perhaps even more pressing now, cannot be solved off-hand, but certain urgent needs are pretty clearly formulated in the minds of most of us at the present time. We know, for instance, that our legal and administrative systems need to be overhauled through the modification of property inheritance, the revision of the economic equities in distribution, and the reorganization of educational systems, and the like, so that there shall be greater equality of opportunity as foundation-stones of democracy. But is the attainment of all these conditions of the democratic state possible? Can the people acquire information regarding the conditions of the common good, can they develop a method for the control of their government, can they revise the economic, social, and educational foundations of their political and social order so that it will make for justice? Many who have striven hardest to secure such ends are profoundly pessimistic regarding the possibilities, but it is as yet too early to answer in the negative.

But if the methodological obstacles to democracy as above described can be removed, will war thereby be made to vanish? In

the case of civil war the answer is easy and is in the affirmative. For a democratic control of the state presupposes a fundamental unity of interests on the part of the masses of the people and this is most likely to come through a common industrial development. A democratic state must therefore also be a geographic and economic unity. Democracy is not possible where there is a conflict of economic interests, such for instance as existed in this country preceding the Civil War, or where there are well-marked traditional differences, as of culture or religion, though in time these latter differences tend to disappear under the reforming influence of economic unity.

In the case of international contests the answer is more difficult. In those cases where foreign aggression is stimulated by a ruling class for the sake of a class interest, as by an unpopular dynasty in order that it may divert public attention from itself by an appeal to patriotic phrases and the scent of powder, or by a ruling financial and commercial class for the purpose of capturing profitable foreign loans and foreign markets which are more profitable to this class than to the people of the country as a whole, democracy would eliminate foreign wars because it would eliminate those self-seeking classes which initiate the wars for their own gain. And it must be admitted that many foreign wars have such origins at the present time.

There is another possible cause of foreign wars which has already begun to operate to some extent in our time. In this case war represents a food struggle on a national scale. Where a country develops a population on an industrial basis far in excess of its ability to produce its food at home, as is markedly the case in Great Britain today and increasingly true of modern Germany, some sort of title to outlying markets, such as colonies or dependencies, may appear to be a vital national necessity. If, moreover, those sources of food supply and of markets for manufactured goods or loans with which food is purchased are separated from the overpopulated and overindustrialized country by large expanses of sea, it may seem that national survival itself depends upon having such a navy that it may control this sea in case the country with a scanty food supply is attacked. In such a case, even in a democratic state,

where dynasties and commercial classes do not profit at the expense of the masses of the people, war might under certain conditions appear to be justifiable as the only alternative to starvation.

In such a case wars in a democracy could be avoided only by intelligent control of internal conditions—in this case public control of population to restrain it from exceeding the national food resources, thus preventing that nation from becoming dependent on other peoples for its food. Also it would be necessary so to balance industrial and agricultural production that the former should not crowd out the latter through some system of unproductive land ownership, such as might occur in a non-democratic state. The economic causes of foreign wars cannot be entirely eliminated until there is adequate control over population, so that foreign conquest will not seem desirable merely because there is not food and food-producing lands enough at home.

And even under these conditions foreign wars would not cease until all states became democratic, and exercised rigid control over their populations, for the ruling classes in undemocratic states might still find it profitable to attack the democratic ones. And it is even conceivable, though scarcely probable, that one democratic state might seek to subjugate a more prosperous one merely to prey upon its wealth.

If we should make an application of these principles to our own country today we might safely contend that if the United States were a truly democratic state it is scarcely conceivable that it would be involved in war or would need to make very active preparations for war. For we have sufficient basic economic and geographic unity so that civil war would not be a menace to us; without predatory industrial classes we should not find foreign industrial and financial control particularly profitable to our people as a whole; nor does our population yet press sufficiently upon our food-producing facilities to turn our attention as a people abroad; and, finally, we are so isolated by long stretches of sea and our population is so large that it is not conceivable that any powerful foreign state would attempt to invade us. We may therefore safely conclude that if the United States engages in a foreign war it is not likely to be in one democratically initiated.